



**State of West Virginia
Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The State Fire Marshal's Office Reminds You to
"Change Your Clocks, Change Your Batteries®"**



Charleston, WV -- Last year, West Virginia's fire departments responded to over 8,400 fires. Almost 3,000 of these fires occurred in residences, where most fire deaths take place.

"Every year we see the same scenario: the weather gets colder, people are indoors more, and a fire breaks out. If the home has no working smoke alarms, the residents won't get the early warning they need to safely escape the fire—and we'll be investigating more fire fatalities that shouldn't have happened," said Sterling Lewis, Jr., West Virginia's State Fire Marshal. "Fires spread so much more quickly than people realize. A working smoke alarm sounding off can literally mean the difference between surviving a fire or becoming a victim."

There are many types of smoke alarms to suit different needs. Standard ionization and photoelectric smoke alarms are two of the most common types, and although they function differently, both detect and give notification of fires.

Ionization type alarms are characterized by their ability to sense faster-moving, flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms tend to sense slower, more smoldering-type fires quickly.

Provided both kinds of alarms have the UL® seal (Underwriters Laboratories) to ensure they have met nationally recognized safety standards, having either type or using both types in the home provides adequate warning in case of fire. Smoke alarms have a wide range of user-friendly options, including hush buttons for nuisance alarms, long-life (10-yr.) batteries, and various types of notification sounds.

Remember these tips about smoke alarms:

- Have smoke alarms on every level of your home, especially outside sleeping areas—and preferably inside bedrooms as well.
- Test them at least once a month, and replace batteries at least once a year—use a birthday or anniversary as a reminder, or when you set your clocks for Daylight Savings Time.
- Replace detectors after 10 years.
- Place smoke alarms according to manufacturer's directions.
- Clean the outside ONLY of a smoke alarm by gently going over the cover with the brush attachment of your vacuum cleaner. Never paint a smoke alarm.
- Whenever a smoke alarm beeps, **take it seriously**. It might just be a false alarm from cooking, temperature fluctuations, or dust—but it might not. You can't afford to ignore the alert. Everyone in the family needs to react immediately.
- Develop and practice a **home escape plan**. Make sure your family knows two ways out of each room, a safe meeting place outside, how to call 9-1-1 once they're out, and why they should NEVER go back into a burning house.
- West Virginia State Code requires **all property owners** to provide and install a working smoke alarm in the vicinity of the sleeping areas.
- For more information on smoke alarms and home fire safety, visit these websites:

www.nfpa.org
www.usfa.dhs.gov
www.homesafetycouncil.org

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